



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Region 6

**1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200
Dallas, TX 75202-2733**

May 21, 2013

Lake Meredith National Recreation Area,
Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument General Management Plan
National Park Service
Denver Service Center-Erin Flanagan
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has completed its review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/General Management Plan (GMP) for the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area (LMNRA) and Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument (AFQNM) prepared by the National Park Service (NPS). The purpose of the proposed action is to analyze potential management alternatives for the LMNRA and AFQNM for the next 15-20 years.

EPA rates the DEIS as "EC-2" i.e., EPA has "environmental concerns and requests additional information" in the Final EIS (FEIS). The EPA's Rating System Criteria can be found here: <http://www.epa.gov/oecaerth/nepa/comments/ratings.html>. The "EC" rating is based on potential impacts to natural, cultural, and park resources. The "2" indicates the DEIS does not contain sufficient analysis and information concerning abandoned oil and gas operations, fish and wildlife resources, and cultural resources. Detailed comments are enclosed with this letter which clearly identifies our concerns and the informational needs requested for incorporation into the Final EIS (FEIS). Responses to comments should be placed in a dedicated section of the FEIS and should include the specific location where the revision, if any, was made. If no revision was made, a clear explanation should be included.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review the DEIS. Please send our office two copies of the FEIS, and an internet link, when it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, EPA (Mail Code 2252A), Ariel Rios Federal Building, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004. Our classification will be published on the EPA website, www.epa.gov, according to our responsibility under Section 309 of the CAA to inform the public of our views on the proposed Federal action. If you have any questions or concerns, I can be reached at 214-665-8006, or contact Keith Hayden of my staff at hayden.keith@epa.gov or 214-665-2133.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rhonda Smith", is written over a horizontal line.

Rhonda Smith
Chief, Office of Planning
And Coordination

Enclosure

**DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE
LAKE MEREDITH NATIONAL RECREATION AREA AND ALIBATES FLINT
QUARRIES NATIONAL MONUMENT**

BACKGROUND: Lake Meredith was originally created by the construction of Sanford Dam on the Canadian River in 1965, and referred to as the Canadian River Project. The Dam and Lake were designed to provide water for cities in the Texas panhandle. In 1968, the Bureau of Reclamation turned over operation and maintenance of the Sanford Dam and facilities to the Canadian River Municipal Water Authority (CRMWA). The area was established as the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1990 with the intent to provide public access to diverse land- and water-based recreational opportunities. Today, the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area occupies portions of Moore, Hutchinson, Potter, and Carson counties. The recreation area is over 44,900 acres and the lake is the largest body of freshwater in the Texas panhandle. Although its management has been guided by a master plan and statement for management, a general management plan has not previously been prepared for this national park unit.

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument (AFQNM) was established by Congress in 1965 to provide for the preservation, protection, interpretation, and scientific study of Alibates flint deposits. The national monument is on the eastern edge of the LMNRA and the two NPS are managed jointly. A management plan for the national monument was prepared by the NPS in 1976 and amended in 1985, but it does not meet the requirements of a general management plan and is out of date.

CHAPTER 2: ALTERNATIVES

Table 7: Summary of Costs for Alternative 3, Page 100

The dollar amount listed for total one-time capital costs in table 7 appears to be incorrect. This number is supposed to reflect the one-time capital costs for both essential and desirable projects, but only reflects the cost for essential projects.

Recommendation:

- Please amend the dollar amount in table 7 to reflect total one-time capital costs for both essential and desirable projects.

CHAPTER 5: CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Section 7 Consultation for Threatened and Endangered Species, Page 246

The DEIS reached a conclusion that the proposed action “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” threatened or endangered species. The documentation to support this statement was not included in the DEIS.

Recommendation:

- Include all correspondence with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the FEIS. The USFWS needs to concur with the determination reached in the DEIS that the proposed action “may affect, is not likely to adversely affect” threatened or endangered species.

The DEIS reached a conclusion that cultural, historic, or archeological resources in the AFQNM will be adversely affected as a result of excavation. The documentation to support this statement was not included in the DEIS.

Recommendation:

- Include concurrence and consultation from consulted tribes, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer in the FEIS. Also, please contact the Oklahoma and New Mexico SHPO's to see if they have any information to offer regarding potentially affected tribes that may now reside within the boundaries of their respective states. The FEIS should describe mitigation measures the NPS will undertake to minimize impacts to cultural, historical, or archeological resources.

GENERAL COMMENTS RELATED TO OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT

Existing and Abandoned but not Reclaimed Wells

Many of the resource areas dismissed from detailed analysis in the Draft GMP/EIS were discussed in the 2002 Oil and Gas Management Plan (2002 Plan) for Lake Meredith. The 2002 Plan is referenced in many areas of the Draft GMP/EIS as providing assurance that oil and gas operations will not adversely affect resource areas. In the 2002 Plan, 674 acres of existing and abandoned, but not reclaimed, operations were determined to have continued adverse effects to air resources, floodplains and water resources, geologic resources, paleontological resources, vegetation, wetlands, fish and wildlife resources, visitor use and experience, and cultural resources. There was no quantitative or qualitative analysis accompanying this statement in the 2002 Plan, and no remedies for the adverse impacts were included in the Plan. In the NPS response to EPA's comments contained in the Final 2002 Plan, NPS stated they did not have the regulatory authority to require operators of abandoned oil and gas facilities to clean up their abandoned sites. While the NPS does not have the regulatory authority to require operators to perform reclamation of areas abandoned prior to the establishment of the Non Federal Oil and Gas Rights Regulations¹, this does not exempt NPS from analyzing the effects that existing or abandoned oil and gas operations have on the environment.

Recommendation:

- Include a detailed discussion for all resource areas that were considered adversely affected by existing and abandoned oil and gas operations in the 2002 Plan. Provide a quantitative or qualitative analysis of how each resource area was, and is currently, adversely affected. Examples of information needed to quantify adverse effects could include surface or groundwater quality monitoring data, areal extent of vegetation disturbance, etc. If the existing and abandoned operations are not currently adversely affecting resources, please include a discussion of how the effects were mitigated.

Oil and Gas Maps

The GMP/EIS does not include any mapping of current or abandoned oil and gas operations within the National Recreational Area or National Monument.

Recommendation:

- Include maps that delineate current and abandoned oil and gas operations. Include other relevant information in the maps that could be affected by oil and gas activities, such as drinking water supplies and recreational areas.

¹ 36 C.F.R. §§ 9.30 – 9.52